

being unpatentable over Bickford. However, Claims 32 and 49 were indicated as allowed, and Claims 33-45/32, 39/29-31 and 50/49 were indicated as including allowable subject matter.

First, Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indications that Claims 32 and 49 were allowed and that Claims 33-45/32, 39/29-31 and 50/49 include allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Claim 50 has been amended to depend from Claim 49. However, in light of further amendments to Claims 29-31, the other dependent claims are maintained in their previous forms.

In response to the objection to the specification and drawings, the word “buffer strip” ✓  
recited in Claim 43 has been amended to “backrest” as suggested by the Examiner.  
Therefore, no further objection is anticipated on this matter. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort and derive a mutually agreeable solution to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Claims 29-31 have been amended and Claims 51-54 have been newly added herein. These amendments and additions in the claims are believed to be supported by the original specification, claims and drawings. Thus, no new matter is believed to be added thereby.

Briefly, amended Claim 29 is directed to a shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, including at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic and comprising a face configured to support items, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners, and a plurality of coverpieces comprising a plurality of cornerpieces each positioned to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel when assembled.

The outstanding Office Action asserts that Bickford discloses a “shelf” as recited in Claim 29. However, Bickford clearly does not teach a shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, including at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic and comprising a face configured to support items, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners, as recited in amended Claim 29. On the contrary to the assertion in the outstanding Office Action, Bickford only discloses a picture frame which cannot be adapted as a shelf, specifically a shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, and clearly the panel 13 of the Bickford picture frame is not a support panel having a face configured to support items. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the structure recited in Claim 29 is distinguishable from Bickford. w/

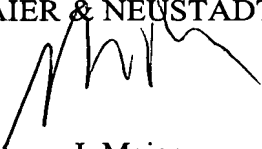
Likewise, independent Claims 30 and 31 have been amended to include subject matter substantially similar to what is recited in Claim 29 to the extent discussed above, and Claims 51-54 are directed to refrigerators having at least one shelf including at least one support panel. Thus, Claims 30, 31 and 51-54 are also believed to be distinguishable from Bickford.

For the foregoing reasons, Claims 29-31 and 51-54 are believed to be allowable. Furthermore, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to dependent Claims 33-43 and 45 ultimately depending from Claims 29-31. Hence, Claims 33-43 and 45 are believed to be allowable as well.

In view of the amendments and discussion presented above and in light of the prior indication of the allowed claims and allowable subject matter, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Therefore, an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,  
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier  
Registration No. 25,599  
Robert T. Pous  
Registration No. 29,099  
Attorneys of Record



**22850**

Tel: (703) 413-300  
Fax: (703) 413-2220  
GJM/RTP/AY:fmw  
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**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel Claims 46-48 without prejudice, and amend Claims 29-31, 43 and 50 as follows:

--29. (Twice Amended) A [refrigerator] shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic and comprising a face configured to support items, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising a plurality of cornerpieces each positioned to cover one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein the plurality of cornerpieces covers an entire periphery of the at least one support panel when assembled.

30. (Twice Amended) A [refrigerator] shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic and comprising a face configured to support items, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece covering one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces is adapted to fit together with another one of the plurality of coverpieces.

31. (Twice Amended) A [refrigerator] shelf capable of supporting foodstuffs in a refrigerator, comprising:

at least one support panel formed of at least one sheet of glass or plastic and comprising a face configured to support items, the at least one support panel having a plurality of corners; and

a plurality of coverpieces comprising at least one cornerpiece covering one of the plurality of corners of the at least one support panel, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces is adapted to slip or slide in another one of the plurality of coverpieces so as to form a telescopic set of coverpieces.

43. (Twice Amended) A shelf according to claims 29, 30, 31 or 32, wherein at least one of the plurality of coverpieces includes at least one [buffer strip] backrest or is configured to receive the at least one [buffer strip] backrest.

46.-48. (Canceled)

50. (Twice Amended) A method according to [claims 46, 47, 48 or] claim 49, wherein at least two of the plurality of coverpieces or cornerpieces are fitted one with the other over at least part of their length and height.--

Please add new claims 51.-54. as follows:

--51.-54. (New)--